

Special Education

What Parents of Private or Home-Schooled Children Need to Know

Question 1: What do I do if I think my child may have a disability?

The school district in which you live is required to help you answer this question. Call the district special education office and explain your concerns. The district will:

- Screen your child to determine if there is a need for more extensive assessment and, if necessary;
- Evaluate your child for a possible disability and the need for special education services.

Question 2: Do I have a “say” in any part of the evaluation?

Yes, you will be a member of the team that collects and considers all of the information about your child and makes the eligibility decision. You will be asked to provide information about your child (such as medical records or your observations). The school must obtain your informed consent before administering any individualized tests to your child.

Question 3: What happens if my child is eligible for special education?

That depends upon you.

- If there is a possibility that you will enroll your child in the public school, you and the school will develop an individualized education program (IEP) that identifies the specific services your child would receive in school. You would then decide if you want to enroll your child and have him/her receive those services;
- If you are not interested in enrolling your child in the public school but you are interested in some special services for your child, you and the school can develop a plan that identifies the services the school is prepared to provide to your child;
- If you are not interested in any further assistance from the school, you are not obligated to have your child participate in any way.

Question 4: What does the public school have to do for children with disabilities who are enrolled in private or home schools?

The major activities school districts must do are:

- Engage in child find activities for ages birth through 21 years in order to locate, identify, and evaluate private/home-schooled children with disabilities;

- Expend a proportionate amount of federal IDEA funds on services to private/home-schooled children with disabilities aged three through 21 years;
- In consultation with representatives of private/home-schooled children with disabilities, determine what services will be offered;
- Develop service plans for those children who have been selected to receive services;
- Provide services according to those service plans up to the proportional amount of expenditures.

Question 5: What rights do I have as a parent of a private/home-schooled child with a disability?

The children with disabilities (and their families) who are enrolled in private/home schools:

- Have a right to services by personnel having the same qualifications as students enrolled in the public school;
- Have a right to file complaints or request a due process hearing in the areas of child identification and evaluation but do not have a right to request a due process hearing in the other areas of IDEA, such as service provision;
- Do not have an individual entitlement to a free appropriate public education or any particular service even if other private/home-schooled students are receiving those services.

Question 6: Where can I get more information about special education?

First, talk with the county school superintendent and your local school district special education director as they have specific information about services in your location. Next, visit the Arizona Department of Education (ADE) website at www.ade.az.gov/ess and explore the information listed there. Of particular interest are the links to the ADE/ESS pages entitled “Enhancing Arizona’s Parent Networks” and “Parent Information Network.” If you need additional information or have a specific concern, contact the ADE/ESS office at (602) 542-4000.